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Economic and Social Council

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**Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**
**Sixty-second session**

**Summary record of the 60th meeting**
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 25 September 2017, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Bras Gomes

## Contents

Consideration of reports

(a) Reports submitted by States parties in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant (continued)

*Sixth periodic report of the Russian Federation*

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

**Consideration of reports**

**(a) Reports submitted by States parties in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant** (*continued*)

*Sixth periodic report of the Russian Federation* (E/C.12/RUS/6; E/C.12/RUS/Q/6 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of the Russian Federation took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation), introducing his country's sixth periodic report (E/C.12/RUS/6), said that the efforts of the Russian Federation to promote human development were based on its Constitution, which guaranteed equal human rights and freedoms and prohibited any infringement of citizens' rights on social, racial, ethnic, linguistic or religious grounds.

3. Major changes had taken place since the consideration of the previous periodic report of the Russian Federation in 2011. In May 2012, the President had signed decrees providing for measures to improve the situation in all the areas covered by the Covenant. Over the reporting period, the wages of workers in various sectors had increased significantly, the affordable housing market had grown, and inter-ethnic harmony had been strengthened. Special measures had been taken to improve the financial situation of families with three or more children, to make it easier for women to combine work and childcare, and to provide vocational training for mothers on parental leave with young children.

4. The policies adopted to strengthen the protection of social rights in the period 2012-2016 had included the National Children's Strategy for 2012-2017, the road map for State migration policy, the revised Federal Act on the Basic Principles of Social Services, and the Federal Act on the Special Assessment of Working Conditions. The Government had approved a road map for State family policy, with a view to protecting the family as the bedrock of Russian society; an action strategy for senior citizens, to improve the well-being of the elderly; and the consumer protection strategy, which was one of the first examples in the world of a dedicated strategy for the protection of consumers belonging to specific vulnerable groups. In March 2017, the Government had approved the national women's strategy and set up a council to coordinate its implementation; the draft implementation plan provided for priority measures across a range of areas.

5. During the reporting period, the Russian Federation had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and had introduced major amendments to legislation related to their protection. Discrimination on the basis of disability had been declared inadmissible. Implementation of the "Accessible environment" programme had been under way since 2011, with the aim of ensuring barrier-free living conditions for persons with disabilities by 2020. Efforts had been made to promote their employment and improve their professional skills. In the period 2013-2015, 44,200 jobs had been created for persons with disabilities.

6. Significant progress had been achieved in implementing digital technologies in the social sphere. There were dedicated web portals to help citizens to find work, receive advice on working conditions and file complaints. All federal and regional State authorities could be contacted directly through dedicated applications on their websites. The register of persons with disabilities and social security data had also been digitized.

7. Despite the financial and economic crisis and the unilateral sanctions imposed in 2014 and 2015, the Russian Federation had continued to fulfil all its social obligations towards its citizens. The unemployment rate had fallen from 6.5 per cent in 2011 to the current 5.2 per cent, and the minimum wage had nearly doubled over the same period. The minimum wage was currently equivalent to 72 per cent of the minimum subsistence level of the working population, and a bill had been prepared to provide for that figure to rise to 85 per cent by 1 January 2018 and to 100 per cent by 1 January 2019. The proportion of the working population paid less than the minimum subsistence level had nearly halved

between 2011 and 2016. In 2016, legislative measures had been taken to increase the liability of employers for the late payment of wages. The number of workers owed wages had fallen from around 113,000 in 2011 to 70,000 in 2016.

8. Now that economic growth had returned, the Government was working to modernize all aspects of economic and social life. To that end, it had developed a "pilot portfolio" of priority projects for a range of areas, including health care, education, housing and employment, and had set corresponding goals for the short and medium terms.

9. In 2015, the President had set up the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs, which had since drawn up strategy papers on government policy in that area. The Russian Federation was one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world, and its efforts to ensure inter-ethnic peace and harmony reflected a historical tradition that could be traced back to the early twentieth century. In 2016, approval had been given to a State programme for the implementation of government policy on ethnicity, which contained dedicated sections on the socioeconomic development of the numerically small indigenous peoples of the north, Siberia and the far east, and on the sociocultural adaptation and integration of migrants. In 2017, approval had been given to a plan for the third phase (2016-2025) of the implementation of the road map for the sustainable development of the numerically small indigenous peoples of the north, Siberia and the far east.

10. The Government was working to address a number of remaining challenges, including irregular migration, the informal labour market and substandard housing.

11. **Mr. Windfuhr** (Country Task Force) said that he wished to know when the State party would ratify the Optional Protocol to the Covenant and, if it had decided not to do so, what reasons had been given for that decision. It was unclear whether the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation had been granted adequate resources, access and powers, how it operated in remote areas of the country, and why the majority of the complaints that it received concerned social and economic rights. It would be helpful if the delegation could provide additional information on the application of the Covenant in national courts, and on the measures planned to ensure the justiciability of economic, social and cultural rights and the provision of judicial or other remedies for violations of such rights.

12. More information would be welcome on Federal Act No. 121 of 20 July 2012, pursuant to which certain non-commercial organizations could be declared "foreign agents", and on the possibility of its amendment or repeal. In the context of that Federal Act and Federal Act No. 129 of 23 May 2015, pursuant to which certain foreign and international organizations could be declared "undesirable", he wished to know whether non-governmental organizations working to promote the rights enshrined in the Covenant were able to carry out their work effectively. He would appreciate more information on the current situation of human rights defenders in the State party, including information on threats against trade union leaders, non-governmental organizations and activists working in the field of economic, social and cultural rights, and on the measures planned to improve the situation of such persons.

13. He invited the delegation to inform the Committee of any measures taken to ensure that persons living in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, as the territory was referred to in General Assembly resolutions, were able to enjoy their economic, social and cultural rights, and to describe how those rights would be effectively protected.

14. It would be helpful if the delegation could indicate whether the State party planned to develop an action plan for the implementation of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework; what efforts would be made to ensure that Russian companies conducted effective human rights due diligence; and how the State party monitored the activities of Russian companies with a view to preventing violations of the rights enshrined in the Covenant. In addition, he wished to know what steps had been taken to implement the Paris Agreement; how the State party would be affected by climate change; which groups would be most severely affected; which adaptation measures were the most important; and what contribution would be made to climate change mitigation at the global level.

15. He wondered whether the State party had considered the possibility of abolishing the requirement that an indigenous group should have fewer than 50,000 members in order to qualify for special State protection. It was unclear when the federal Government would recognize "territories of traditional nature use" under the relevant Federal Act of 2001 and what would be done to ensure that indigenous tenure rights were adequately protected. He wished to know how the Government sought to obtain the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples for extractive projects carried out in the areas in which they had traditionally lived; whether the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples would be taken into account in such cases; what efforts would be made to provide adequate reparation to the Shor people following the destruction of the village of Kazas, and what would be done to protect indigenous areas close to extractive facilities.

16. It would be helpful if the delegation could indicate whether personal and corporate taxation rates were sufficiently high to support the effective protection of economic, social and cultural rights; whether it believed that the tax system was just, given that consumption taxes generated larger revenues than personal and corporate taxes; whether the sanctions imposed on the country had affected the availability of resources for the protection of economic, social and cultural rights; whether the State party intended to increase the proportion of its gross national income allocated to development assistance; and what financial contribution would be made to climate adaptation funds. In addition, he invited the delegation to compare the resources allocated to the protection of economic, social and cultural rights with those allocated to the armed forces.

17. He wondered whether the State party intended to develop comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, which would benefit a number of groups, including Roma, migrant workers, indigenous peoples, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons, stateless and unregistered persons, drug users and non-Ukrainian asylum seekers. He wished to know what measures would be taken to guarantee equal rights for men and women, what priority areas had been established under the national women's strategy for 2017-2022, and whether additional efforts would be made to counter domestic violence.

*The meeting was suspended at 3.45 p.m. and resumed at 4 p.m.*

18. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation) said that it had been decided that accession to the Optional Protocol to the Covenant was unnecessary, as national legislation was sufficiently well developed to provide for adequate protection measures for economic, social and cultural rights. The Commissioner for Human Rights was represented in all regions and maintained a website through which complaints could be filed. The fact that a high proportion of the complaints received in recent years had concerned social and labour rights was due in part to the difficult economic situation during that period.

19. The provisions of the Covenant that concerned non-discrimination and equality had been incorporated into national legislation, such that there was no need for a separate law on non-discrimination. The Covenant had been cited in decisions of the Supreme Court and those of lower courts, which showed that its provisions carried considerable legal weight. The Committee's general comments and concluding observations were forwarded to the Supreme Court and lower courts. Other international human rights instruments could also be applied in national courts.

20. **Ms. Gurzhieva** (Russian Federation) said that, in order to be deemed to be "performing the function of a foreign agent" under Federal Act No. 121 of 20 July 2012, a non-commercial organization had to be registered in the Russian Federation, receive funding from foreign sources and conduct political activities in the territory of the Russian Federation. Since its entry into force, only 164 non-commercial organizations had been required to register as non-commercial organizations performing the function of a foreign agent, and such non-commercial organizations had the right to be removed from the register if they ceased to operate. The burden of proving that an organization was performing the function of a foreign agent fell on the State.

21. Non-commercial organizations deemed to be performing the function of a foreign agent were not prevented from receiving funding from either Russian or foreign sources or from conducting political activities. Indeed, during the latest round of presidential grants

for the development of civil society, the beneficiaries had included non-commercial organizations deemed to be performing the function of a foreign agent. The concept of "political activities" excluded activities conducted in a number of fields, including science, culture and art. The Constitutional Court had found that the application of Federal Act No. 121 did not represent an attempt to discredit politically active non-commercial organizations, and the fines imposed on non-commercial organizations that failed to register as foreign agents, if required to do so, had been reduced. The law enforcement authorities had since developed a unified practice for the enforcement of Federal Act No. 121.

22. Pursuant to Federal Act No. 129 of 23 May 2015, a foreign or international non-governmental organization operating in the territory of the Russian Federation could be declared to be undesirable if it was deemed to pose a threat to the constitutional order of the Russian Federation, the country's defence capability or the security of the State. The Ministry of Justice was charged with maintaining and publishing the register of such declarations, which currently contained information on 11 organizations.

23. **Ms. Mukabenova** (Russian Federation) said that great importance was attached to the issue of business and human rights. Work was under way to strengthen corporate social responsibility, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had a business council in which the matter was regularly discussed. The Russian Federation had been instrumental in the creation of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, and the Forum on Business and Human Rights. The country made annual financial contributions to support such activities and continued to promote the issue of business and human rights in all United Nations forums. In addition, the Government supported the involvement of Russian business in international multilateral discussions and forums. Although the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights provided for the development of a national plan, the realization of those obligations took place at the national level.

24. The sites at which industrial and extractive activities were conducted were often close to areas in which numerically small indigenous peoples had traditionally lived. The Russian Federation was working to develop a system to regulate the interactions of numerically small indigenous peoples and extractive companies. The company responsible for one oil project, Sakhalin-2, for instance, had held two rounds of consultation in the area where the indigenous people resided, and the associated plans took into account their traditional means of subsistence. The project included a special series of measures, such as complaints procedures, to mitigate its negative impacts. Moreover, the company had, with the cooperation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, translated into the languages of the local indigenous peoples the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It was the goal of the Russian Federation to ensure an equitable relationship between the State, business corporations and indigenous peoples.

25. **Mr. Sirenkii** (Russian Federation) said that one of the responsibilities of the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs was to protect the rights and freedoms of indigenous peoples. In early 2017, the Agency had proposed amendments to the relevant legislation to stipulate that business operations in the natural homelands of indigenous peoples should give greater consideration to the opinions of the communities living there. The activities of extractive industries in territories of traditional nature use would thus be regulated, to ensure that the indigenous peoples concerned were consulted.

26. Given the absence of legislation on compensation for losses incurred as a result of business activities conducted in lands of traditional nature use, the Agency had proposed legislative changes to define such compensation and ensure greater transparency. It had also proposed a bill to create a register of information on indigenous peoples; the lack of adequate data was the biggest challenge currently faced by the Agency, and the register would make it possible to monitor socioeconomic conditions and take any necessary actions.

27. In 2012, a group of Shor people had approached the local authorities to express their concerns regarding coal mining activities taking place in their region. Consequently, the coal company involved had decided to buy the land where it was conducting operations. The families living there had been offered compensation of approximately 3.5 million roubles per household. Despite that amount being sufficient for the purchase of a new home in the municipality, some of the potential beneficiaries had deemed it unsatisfactory. To further assist the people affected, the regional authorities had decided to relocate and rebuild the settlement affected; that arrangement had been decided on in conjunction with the Shor people.

28. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation) said that the tax and budgetary codes of the Russian Federation provided for a flexible mechanism for the distribution of monetary resources with a view to supporting areas and organizations in need of development. Tax breaks, such as lower corporate taxes and lower value added tax, existed for socially focused entities, including educational and medical organizations. In addition, small and medium enterprises were exempt from paying taxes for the first two years after their official incorporation. A progressive system of taxation had been in place until 2000. However, because it had proven to be ineffective, it had been replaced with a flat tax, which had produced an increase in tax revenue.

29. Because not all companies were able to deal with the effects of the international sanctions imposed on the country, the risk of workplace redundancy had increased. The Russian Federation had adopted measures to mitigate the strain placed on the labour market. Moreover, despite the problems entailed by the sanctions, the Russian Federation was fully meeting all its social commitments and obligations.

30. In keeping with article 2 of the Covenant, the Constitution provided for the prohibition of discrimination on a number of grounds. Furthermore, the Criminal Code provided for punishment in the event of violation of the provisions ensuring the equality of all citizens.

31. The national women's strategy sought to ensure implementation of the main government policies for improving the situation of women. The objectives of the strategy included increased educational opportunities for women, enhanced health services for women, greater participation of women in decision-making and a decrease in the gender pay gap. In addition, measures had been taken to prevent the employment of women in hazardous workplaces. Lastly, a bill on the prevention and elimination of domestic violence was pending adoption. If the bill was not passed, legislation such as the Criminal Code and Administrative Offences Code would nonetheless provide a suitable legal framework for addressing the issue.

32. **Mr. De Schutter** said that he would like to hear more about why the State party had shifted from a relatively progressive system of taxation to a flat tax rate. He would also appreciate an account of how the Russian Federation justified such a step in the light of its obligations under the Covenant. In 2014, legislative changes had been introduced to make it easier to remove indigenous peoples from their lands; he would welcome clarification of how that was deemed compatible with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. With regard to the fight against corruption, he would be grateful for details of the effectiveness of the national anti-corruption strategy, the number of corruption cases that had been heard by the courts, the protections afforded to whistle-blowers, and the right of victims of corruption to file complaints.

33. **Mr. Sadi** said that he would appreciate assurances that all the multiple ethnic groups in the country were treated equally. In addition, he would welcome examples of how the State party had implemented the recommendations issued by the Committee during the previous reporting cycle. In the light of the importance of ensuring the justiciability of the Covenant, it would be useful to learn how the positive measures taken in respect of migrants and persons with disabilities, for example, were anchored to Covenant provisions. Lastly, he wished to know whether there were any plans to reduce the use of atomic energy.

34. **Mr. Uprimny** (Country Task Force) asked whether the State party intended to return to a progressive system of taxation and if not, whether it had provided for any measures with which to counter the inequality generated by the current tax scheme.

35. **Mr. Kedzia** said that he would welcome clarification of the term "foreign agent". He would also appreciate a description of the activities of the 11 organizations that had been formally identified as undesirable organizations by the State party.

36. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation) said that after several reviews of the flat tax it had been determined that increasing the tax burden would be an ineffective measure.

37. **Mr. Kolbanov** (Russian Federation) said that, in 2016, 12 per cent of the budget had been allocated to defence spending and 57.3 per cent to spending in social and cultural areas; it was thus clear that priority was given to financing social and cultural issues. In addition, the Government was doing its best to reduce income inequalities; between 2011 and 2016, the income differentiation ratio had been reduced by more than half, thanks to special Government measures.

38. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation) said that as part of its efforts to tackle the problem, the Russian Federation had signed the United Nations Convention against Corruption. A bill concerning the protection of whistle-blowers was currently pending approval. Significant work was also being done to mainstream anti-corruption standards.

39. **Ms. Gurzhieva** (Russian Federation) said that, according to the Constitutional Court, the discrediting of non-commercial organizations identified as foreign agents was not the goal of such identification. Under Russian law, those organizations were subject to certain limitations, including a ban on the dissemination of information, in order to maintain law and order and protect national security, all of which was in keeping with international law and the Covenant.

40. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation) said that the question of atomic power was a political matter.

41. **The Chair**, noting that unemployment rates were particularly high in rural areas and among young persons and had remained fairly stable in spite of measures taken in that regard, said that she wished to know how the Government viewed the situation and what it was doing to improve the effectiveness of its measures to reduce unemployment.

42. She would appreciate more information on the labour rights and social security benefits enjoyed by workers in the informal sector. She wondered, for example, whether they had the right to join trade unions and whether they were protected by minimum wage regulations.

43. She would like more information on plans to repeal or review the list of occupations that could not be performed by women, as well as an update on the situation of LGBTI persons and persons in Crimea without Russian citizenship, in the light of reports of discrimination against both groups in the field of employment.

44. She would appreciate clarification of the status of the bill that was being drafted to raise the minimum wage, as well as further details of the steps being taken to ensure that employers complied with minimum wage regulations and to tackle the problem of undeclared work, in the light of concerns raised by the Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation.

45. The delegation should provide updated information on the gender pay gap and any measures being taken to reduce it. Noting that many migrant workers faced poor working conditions, she enquired how the State party monitored the observance of migrant workers' rights by employers; whether steps had been taken to enable migrant workers to file complaints without fear of reprisals; how many cases of violations of migrant workers' rights had been prosecuted; and what penalties had been imposed in those cases.

46. Drawing attention to the alleged violations of workers' rights during the construction of stadiums for the 2017 Fédération internationale de football association (FIFA) Confederations Cup and the 2018 FIFA World Cup, including the death of 17 workers on stadium sites, she asked what measures had been taken to protect the health and safety of workers in the construction sector.

47. She enquired whether the Government planned to amend article 413 of the Labour Code to remove the restrictions on strikes, in accordance with paragraph 19 of the

Committee's previous concluding observations (E/C.12/RUS/CO/5) and the recommendations of the International Labour Organization.

48. Pointing out that social security was not available to certain groups, such as stateless persons, she asked what changes would be made to ensure universal social security coverage, in line with the Committee's general comment No. 19 on the right to social security. Lastly, she enquired whether the Government planned to harmonize the retirement age for women and men, so as to ensure equal pension rights, and to introduce an unemployment benefit.

49. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation) said that the bill on the minimum wage was before the parliament. In the framework of the national women's strategy, the list of occupations that could not be performed by women would be revised, taking into account recent legislative amendments. Working conditions were monitored by the Federal Labour and Employment Service; employers that failed to take the necessary measures to protect their workers were required to make additional contributions to the pension fund.

50. Legal migrant workers enjoyed full protection of their rights, under specific legislation that had recently been amended. Employers were required to provide medical insurance for migrant workers who were not already covered. The number of legal migrants was regulated by the Government, taking into account the needs of each federal entity. Migrants could obtain a licence for legal employment, for a period of one month to one year, with the possibility of extension. International migration agreements had been signed with States such as Armenia and Belarus; citizens from those States did not require authorization to enter the Russian Federation.

51. As of 2015, temporary residents could exercise their pension rights; furthermore, foreign nationals who had paid social security contributions for at least six months were eligible for unemployment benefits.

52. **Ms. Zaitseva** (Russian Federation) said that the Prosecutor General's Office established inter-agency working groups to coordinate the preparation of events such as the FIFA World Cup. Those working groups discussed measures to ensure compliance with labour legislation on construction sites. During the preparations for the FIFA World Cup, the prosecutor's offices in the Republic of Mordovia and the Kaliningrad Region had taken measures to restore the rights of migrant workers. Monitoring of compliance with labour legislation during construction of the Olympic Winter Games site in Sochi had been carried out by a special department of the prosecutor's office in the Krasnodar Region. Over 500 violations had been dealt with by that department in 2013. Redress had been provided to workers who had not been properly paid, for example. Prosecutors could also hand down administrative decisions to employers, to ensure compliance with health and safety standards.

53. **Mr. Atangana** (Country Task Force) asked how legislation to protect the family was implemented in practical terms and what the minimum legal age for marriage was. With respect to persons placed in institutions, he reiterated the questions posed in paragraph 22 of the list of issues and asked what redress had been provided to victims of ill-treatment in institutions. Noting that acts of violence were defined as criminal or administrative offences depending on the case, he enquired how each type of offence was dealt with and how the State party defined a repeat offence. Lastly, he asked what measures had been taken with respect to street children.

54. **Ms. Liebenberg** (Country Task Force) said that the Committee would appreciate a more detailed explanation of the causes of the rise in poverty and the countermeasures that would be taken in that regard. She wondered whether the register of information on numerically small indigenous peoples would contain information on the social status of indigenous persons and how soon the register would be drawn up.

55. In the light of complaints submitted to the Ombudsman with regard to housing, she asked what measures had been taken to improve the overall quality of housing and to ensure access to temporary housing as required and to affordable utilities.

56. Drawing attention to a recent ruling in which the European Court of Human Rights had found that the demolition of a Roma settlement had constituted a violation of the

Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, she enquired what steps were being taken to legalize Roma settlements and to protect Roma communities from forced evictions, demolitions and disconnection of utilities, in accordance with the Committee's general comment Nos. 4 and 7 on the right to adequate housing and general comment No. 15 on the right to water.

57. Noting that the State party's punitive policy on drug use had given rise to a host of problems, including the rapid spread of HIV, she asked what steps would be taken to promote a human rights-based approach to the issue, in line with the Committee's previous concluding observations (E/C.12/RUS/CO/5), and to adopt methods advocated by the World Health Organization and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, such as opioid substitution therapy.

58. In the light of reports that asylum seekers, refugees and migrants did not enjoy effective access to health care, she enquired what legislative and administrative measures would be taken to address that problem. She wished to draw attention to the fact that Ukrainian citizens in Crimea without Russian citizenship were unable to benefit from free medical care under the mandatory medical insurance scheme and often could not afford private medical care.

59. Lastly, noting that gender reassignment surgery was costly and was not covered by the mandatory medical insurance scheme, she asked what would be done to ensure that transgender persons had access to appropriate and affordable gender reassignment procedures and were treated with respect by health professionals.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*

United Nations E/C.12/2017/SR.61

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# Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

**Sixty-second session**

**Summary record of the sixty-first meeting**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 26 September 2017, at 10 a.m.

*Chair*: Ms. Bras Gomes

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(a) Reports submitted by States parties in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant (*continued*)

*Sixth periodic report of the Russian Federation (continued)*

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

**Consideration of reports**

**(a) Reports submitted by States parties in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant** (*continued*)

*Sixth periodic report of the Russian Federation* (*continued*) (E/C.12/RUS/6; E/C.12/RUS/Q/6 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of the Russian Federation took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation) said that he fully expected that the provisions of the Covenant would be implemented in the State party as a natural part of improving its legislation. Although there were no precise statistics for the number of persons employed in the informal sector, it was estimated to be around 14 million. That was a cause for concern, and the Government and authorities in the regions were taking preventive measures, such as identifying workers who did not have a legal employment contract. They had managed to bring 5 million workers into the formal sector over the previous two years, but there were no guarantees that some of those persons would not drift back into the illegal economy. The authorities were testing a system of exemption from tax and social security payments for two years for nannies, domestic workers and tutors and would assess its effect on the formal sector. The President had issued instructions in early 2016 to reduce the administrative obstacles to informal workers acquiring legal status and meeting tax requirements and to facilitate registration by self-employed persons, define their legal status and reduce their tax burden.

3. With regard to the gender gap in wages, it should be noted that legislation did not allow employers to pay women less than men for the same work; the issue was that women worked overwhelmingly in education, health care, culture and other sectors where wages were low. Furthermore, women generally took time out of paid employment to care for their children and, while they received benefits and could work part-time during such periods, that also had an impact on their salaries. Under a 2012 presidential decree, wages in the sectors concerned were gradually being raised, bringing average women's wages up from 64 per cent of those of men in 2011 to 73 per cent in 2015. It was hoped that near parity would be achieved by 2018.

4. Arrears in salary payments were still a priority issue for the Government, and non-payment was now categorized as an administrative offence. If payment was more than 15 days late, workers had the legal right to stop working but continue to be paid. The Federal Service for Labour and Employment was empowered to investigate cases without requesting authorization from a prosecutor and could do so within one year of the events, rather than only three months as in the past. Some positive results had been achieved, with the number of persons affected halved over the previous five years.

5. **Ms. Zaitseva** (Russian Federation) said that the Office of the Prosecutor General had examined the cases brought claiming discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation in respect of employment rights and had found that no violation had occurred in any of them. Most of the cases concerned persons working in education and thus with children, in which sector, pursuant to the Labour Code, the commission of an immoral offence was considered to be grounds for dismissal, since it was not compatible with the function of educating children.

6. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation) said that strikes were considered a last resort in the case of a labour conflict and were governed by clear legal procedure. However, there were some categories of workers, such as the military and the law enforcement services, who were prohibited from striking and specific situations, such as emergencies, in which strikes were not allowed. The issue that had been raised was that the ban on strikes also covered persons, such as air traffic controllers and pilots, who did not work directly for the State but whose functions were nevertheless vital to the life of the country and security of its citizens. The Government had no plans to change that legislation.

7. Regarding possible discrepancies between the rights of men and women to social security, the main one concerned the age of retirement, which was 55 years for women and 60 years for men — among the lowest in Europe. There had been discussions recently on the controversial question of raising the retirement age, but that was not limited to either sex. It was to be noted that retirement was not mandatory and many individuals worked for another 10 years. If women took time out from their careers to look after their children, the State paid their pension contributions during that period, so their pension rights were not negatively affected.

8. Traditional family values were a core belief in the Russian Federation. The Government's policy on families guaranteed the right to care for one's children and other benefits to encourage parents to do so, including help in setting up family businesses and special provision for entering higher education. A monthly allowance, now equal to 40 per cent of their salary, was payable for up to 18 months to women who were not working in order to care for their children. Other benefits were paid to help improve living conditions and pay for children's education, and they were included in women's pension calculations. Additional incentives for the birth of third and subsequent children were given in certain regions with low birth rates.

9. Eighteen years was the minimum age for marriage in the State party, although the authorities could grant exceptions from the age of 16, on request, for reasons such as pregnancy or emancipation, for instance if the young person was in employment. However, the Russian Federation was a multi-ethnic country and different traditions meant that such exceptions could be granted from the age of 14 in some republics and autonomous regions.

10. Information on provision for persons with disabilities in special educational institutions would be presented to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities when the initial report of the Russian Federation was considered at its nineteenth session in February 2018.

11. **Ms. Rodionova** (Russian Federation) said that the 2016 legislation that made domestic violence an administrative offence had become an instrument for countering such violence. In the first half of 2017, over 105,000 such offences had been stopped. If a perpetrator offended again within one year, the case would be prosecuted under criminal law. Special centres had been set up to offer social and psychosocial assistance to victims of domestic violence, who could obtain the necessary information from various sources, such as the police officers dealing with the case. The Civil Code made provision for victims to claim compensation, with the final amount to be decided by the court, taking account of the circumstances surrounding the offence.

12. **Ms. Gabbasova** (Russian Federation) said that the issues of drug dependency and HIV infection were closely linked. The Government took a comprehensive approach to the problem of drug dependency that was in keeping with the provisions of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961, under which the use of methadone was prohibited, including for substitution therapy. The Government focused on reducing the demand for drugs and had set up a network of regional centres to provide support to drug-dependent persons. The State strategy for the prevention of the spread of HIV in the Russian Federation for the period up to 2020 and beyond, which had been adopted in 2016, was targeted at key groups and made provision for the expansion of HIV testing programmes. In 2016, 32 million people had been tested for HIV, including 2 million foreign nationals. The Government allocated an annual budget of 22 billion roubles to the procurement of medication for people living with HIV. The federal databases that had been created to keep track of the number of people living with HIV, tuberculosis or hepatitis would allow for the creation of personalized treatment plans. The Government produced its own antiretroviral drugs and also ran an import substitution programme. In 2016, changes had been made to the way in which statistics on HIV infections were recorded, with the result that in contrast to the previous annual average increase of 10 per cent, the 2016 statistics appeared to show a drop in infections of 19 per cent. It was hoped that the new databases would facilitate the identification of the exact numbers of people requiring treatment for HIV infection.

13. Foreign nationals in the Russian Federation were required to have a valid health insurance policy. If they were working in the country, it was their employer's responsibility

to determine whether or not they had such a policy. All foreign nationals received emergency medical care free of charge. Specific legislation was in place that determined the levels of medical assistance to which refugees were entitled.

14. **Ms. Khvan** (Russian Federation) said that, since the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol had become part of the Russian Federation following a referendum on 16 March 2014, residents there enjoyed the same fundamental rights and freedoms, including those set out in the Covenant, as their counterparts in other parts of the country. The Federal Government did not accept politically motivated resolutions, including General Assembly resolutions 68/262 and 71/205, which had been adopted by vote.

15. **Ms. Trimchenko** (Russian Federation) said that the website of the Ministry of Education and Science for the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol contained information pertaining to the use of state languages in that part of the country, where 20,000 children in 52 schools were taught in Crimean Tatar and 13,000 children in 13 schools were taught in Ukrainian. At the beginning of each school year, parents chose the language in which they wished their children to receive their education. A bill related to the use of languages had been passed on its first reading by the State Council of Crimea and would be the subject of a consultation process involving non-governmental organizations (NGOs), representatives of ethnic minorities and education sector workers. Every piece of legislation that was adopted would be published in all the state languages of the Republic of Crimea. All ethnic and religious minorities present in the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, including Crimean Tatars and Muslims, were represented in the political process. Work had begun on the establishment of regional autonomy in line with Russian legislation.

16. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation) said that 289 camps had been set up in Crimea in 2015 to house deported citizens. In 2014, the Government had adopted a targeted social and economic development programme aimed at integrating the economies of the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol into that of the Russian Federation. With a view to encouraging inter-ethnic concord, more than 100 projects, including the construction of housing and schools and the development of water and sanitation facilities, had been implemented to facilitate the return of repressed peoples to their traditional homelands in Crimea.

17. **Mr. Kolbanov** (Russian Federation) said that almost no one in the Russian Federation had a daily income of less than US$ 1.90, and only 0.3 per cent of the population earned less than US$ 3.00 per day. While a network of 134 institutions around the country provided support to 90,000 homeless persons each year, unofficial estimates put the actual number of homeless people at around double that figure. Following the drop in world oil prices in 2015 and 2016, there had been an increase in the number of people whose income was below the minimum subsistence level. Despite the Government's efforts to mitigate the effects of outside factors, budget restrictions had hit pensioners especially hard. To counter that impact, in 2015 the usual practice of indexing pensions in line with inflation had been temporarily suspended for working pensioners. The recent increases in the rates of ownership of consumer goods such as televisions and mobile phones appeared to reflect the fact that the population in general had successfully navigated the difficulties caused by higher prices.

18. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation) said the rental market in the Russian Federation was small, given that 90 per cent of homes in the Russian Federation were privately owned. Citizens with low incomes, including pensioners, could access subsidized communal housing.

19. **Mr. Nesterkin** (Russian Federation) said that illegal construction activity had occurred in some Roma communities. To ensure people's safety, judicial rulings had been issued ordering the removal of illegal settlements. The authorities engaged in consultations with Roma communities on the drafting of landownership documents and were working to improve the transport and health-care infrastructure in the areas where those communities lived.

20. Kaliningrad was home to a 1,500-strong Roma community where 170 Roma children attended school. Information on how to access social benefits and medical

assistance had been made freely available on the website of a non-profit organization based in Kaluzhskaya province. The Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs had developed a comprehensive plan on social, economic and ethnocultural development for Roma communities for the period 2017-2019, with the aim of countering stereotypes.

21. **Mr. [illegible]**, noting the amendments that had been made to the Land Code in 2015, said that he would like to learn about the legal safeguards that were in place to ensure that the broad powers afforded to the federal authorities to confiscate land were not abused, including how those safeguards took into account the Committee's general comments Nos. 4 and 7 on the right to adequate housing. It would be helpful to hear about the measures that were in place to guarantee that people were not left homeless following the demolition of their homes for the purpose of development projects. Clarification would be welcome on whether legally constructed houses could be demolished to make way for roads or sports facilities.

22. The Committee would be grateful for details of the advantages that were denied to same-sex couples as a result of the prohibition on same-sex marriage.

23. In the light of reports that quotas and restrictions had been imposed on fishing activities carried out by indigenous peoples, he asked how the Government ensured that such peoples could feed themselves in accordance with their traditions.

24. **Ms. [illegible]**, noting the extremely high abortion rate in the State party, said that she wished to know what steps the authorities were taking or intended to take towards the inclusion of sexual and reproductive health in school curricula.

25. **Mr. [illegible]** (Country Task Force) said that he would like to know whether the Government intended to decriminalize sex workers.

26. It would be interesting to hear about any plans to introduce a quick, transparent and accessible procedure through which transgender persons could obtain legal gender recognition.

27. In connection with drug substitution therapies, it was his understanding that the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961 did not prohibit the use of methadone in the treatment of drug-dependent persons. He would appreciate the delegation's comments on whether the Government would reconsider its policy on harm reduction measures, including the provision of syringes.

28. **Ms. [illegible]** said that there was a need to combat the stereotypes that were prevalent in the State party in relation to the role of men and women in society. The exclusion of women from certain professions, the absence of a quota for the participation of women in public life, and the unequal retirement age that was in force for men and women were incompatible with the provisions of the Covenant.

29. **Ms. [illegible]** (Country Task Force) said that he would welcome information on the situation of street children and on any investigations into acts of violence committed against people living in institutions. It was unclear whether the legal minimum age for marriage was stipulated in the Family Code. In connection with the conversion of domestic violence into an administrative offence, it would be helpful to hear details of the bodies that were responsible for settling administrative disputes.

30. **Mr. [illegible]** said that it was his understanding that in some areas of the State party, marriage could be entered into at the age of 14 years. He would appreciate the delegation's comments on what would be done to bring the legal minimum age for marriage into line with international standards.

31. **Ms. [illegible]** (Country Task Force) said that she would welcome details of the steps that were being taken to investigate allegations of the punitive burning of homes in Chechnya since 2014 and to prosecute any perpetrators of such offences and compensate any families affected.

32. It was her understanding that the restrictions in force in the State party in relation to the use of opiate-based medication, including morphine, made it difficult for persons with a

terminal illness to obtain pain relief. She would be grateful for information on any measures the Government intended to take to provide appropriate palliative care for those persons.

33. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation) said that the legal minimum age for marriage was 18 years, as set out in the Family Code. Exemptions were sometimes made but did not cause any problems.

34. **Ms. Rodionova** (Russian Federation) said that when a complaint of domestic violence was received, the police determined whether an offence had been committed and subsequently passed the case to the court, where it was heard by a federal judge.

35. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation) said that in the Russian Federation, abortion was only one of the methods of contraception available and was permitted at up to 22 weeks' gestation. As part of the humane process that was followed in his country, women who requested an abortion were shown an image of their fetus to ensure that they were comfortable with their decision.

36. **Ms. Gabbasova** (Russian Federation) said that the number of abortions carried out annually had dropped from 935,000 in 2012 to 688,000 in 2016. A network of reproductive health centres provided advice on abortions and contraception.

37. In 2016, the Government had set up a network of palliative care units for persons with a terminal illness. A road map had been adopted to facilitate access to pain-relief medication via electronic prescriptions.

38. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation) said that substitution therapies for drug-dependent persons simply constituted another form of drug abuse. The statistics available showed that the three-tiered comprehensive system in place to reduce dependence on drugs was the most effective method of tackling the problem.

39. **Ms. Zaitseva** (Russian Federation) said that the Ministry of Internal Affairs had investigated the reports of houses being burned down in the village of Yandi in the Chechen Republic. The investigators had been told by neighbours that the owners of the houses had left the village of their own volition after destroying their homes because they were in a poor condition. A forensic examination of earth samples had not identified arson as the cause, and the prosecutor had decided not to institute criminal proceedings.

40. A federal law had been adopted to prevent child homelessness and criminal activity by minors, establishing the scope of preventive activities and the individuals who might be subjected to them. Further measures included the opening of social rehabilitation centres and the launch of a hotline, so that children in difficult living conditions could seek assistance and advice from specialized services. To address child homelessness as a result of orphanhood, the Government had put in place measures to improve the health of families, including the payment of social assistance and benefits. While a recent survey had identified 57,000 children who were not in their parents' care, those children were not necessarily street children. In that sense, she believed that the seriousness of the problem might have been overstated.

41. **Ms. Gabbasova** (Russian Federation) said that although there was no syringe programme in the Russian Federation, there was no prohibition on their use, and in fact they were distributed by not-for-profit organizations that worked with groups such as persons living with HIV and tuberculosis. Nevertheless, despite the international efforts that had been deployed for a number of years, rates of HIV infection and AIDS remained high among drug users. In that context, the Government would examine the recommendations of the World Health Organization and other international bodies before deciding on legislative priorities.

42. **Ms. Gurzhieva** (Russian Federation) said that while same-sex marriage was prohibited in the Russian Federation, there was nothing to prevent individuals from making civil arrangements.

43. **Ms. Rodionova** (Russian Federation) said that the provision of sexual services contributed to the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and undermined morality and traditional social norms, among other negative consequences. Therefore the Government could not shirk its responsibility to counter such activities.

44. **Mr. Druchinin** (Russian Federation) said that the Government ensured respect for the rights of indigenous peoples, including hunting rights. Cultural and territorial rights were regulated by a number of federal laws, including Federal Act No. 209 of 24 July 2009 on Hunting and the Preservation of Hunting Resources, which took account of the traditional lifestyles and economic activities of the indigenous peoples of the north, Siberia and the far east and ensured their access to hunting resources. The Government also provided financial support to fisheries, and the Russian Federation was an active member of the International Whaling Commission.

45. **Mr. Uprimny** said that the Russian Federation had achieved good outcomes in terms of access, quality and public spending in the sphere of education, and its constitutional guarantee of free universal preschool education was commendable. Nevertheless, the Committee was concerned about certain aspects of education for specific populations. A World Bank study had found that preschool enrolment was almost 30 per cent higher in urban areas than in rural ones, while even greater disparities existed between different regions and territories. He wished to know what concrete steps the Government was taking to overcome regional and urban-rural disparities in access to education.

46. The State party had an adequate legislative framework for the protection of persons with disabilities and had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; however, in practice it had failed to implement the concept of reasonable accommodation for such persons. Furthermore, a report by Human Rights Watch documented many barriers preventing their access to quality education. He would therefore appreciate details of steps taken to ensure that persons with disabilities had access to good-quality, inclusive education, as well as confirmation of the number and proportion of children with disabilities under the age of 18 years who were in education, since the figures provided in the replies to the list of issues and annex 7 thereto were unclear.

47. Practical forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals remained a concern. Problems such as bullying had been aggravated by Federal Act No. 135, known as the "gay propaganda" law, which made it illegal to equate heterosexual and homosexual relationships and seemed to legitimize discrimination. Accordingly, he requested information on measures to ensure non-discriminatory access to education for LGBT persons, including the possible repeal of Federal Act No. 135.

48. Access to education continued to be a problem for asylum-seeking and refugee children. Although the Supreme Court had ruled that non-registration could not be used as grounds for non-admission, that ruling did not seem to have been fully implemented; he therefore wondered how the Government might bring its administrative practices into line with the ruling. He also wished to know what steps would be taken to eliminate segregation and discrimination against Roma, given that NGOs had reported that Roma schools offered poor quality education and that Roma parents only agreed to send their children there because they feared greater discrimination in ordinary schools.

49. In the sphere of cultural rights, the Committee would appreciate more details about efforts to protect minority languages, especially the 50 languages thought to be in danger of extinction. Languages seemed to be in less danger of becoming extinct when the indigenous peoples that spoke them enjoyed land rights and other protections; in that context, he asked whether the State party intended to strengthen and expand nomadic schools and other programmes to safeguard the traditional lifestyles of indigenous peoples.

50. Lastly, he said that although Russian, Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar were legally recognized as the official languages of the temporarily occupied territory of Crimea, civil society organizations had raised concerns over restrictions on expressions of cultural identity by the Tatar and Ukrainian communities, the closure of Ukrainian cultural institutions, and the lack of teaching in Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian. What concrete measures had been taken in Crimea to ensure cultural rights and the right to study in one's native language?

51. **Ms. Trinchenko** (Russian Federation) said that between 2011 and 2013, the Government had implemented a 120 billion rouble project to modernize establishments and improve the quality of education services, which had particularly targeted rural schools. A federal education programme for the period 2015-2019 was being implemented to build

schools in new locations where demand was highest. The Government was in the process of abolishing the three-shift system, so that in future rural schools would only have two shifts. During the period 2013-2020, rural schools would receive funding as part of a programme for the development and modernization of sports facilities. A further programme was being implemented to encourage scientists and other graduates to take up permanent jobs in rural schools. The procedural requirements for the closure of rural schools had been tightened.

52. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation) said that the Government had legislated to ensure barrier-free access to all establishments for persons with disabilities. In that context, Federal Act No. 273 on Education in the Russian Federation had been amended to incorporate a special article on inclusive education for persons with disabilities, while the Ministry of Education and Science had prepared recommendations on working with persons with disabilities for all institutions. New educational centres were subject to rigorous building regulations that stipulated the infrastructure requirements for persons with disabilities; accessibility issues in older buildings were addressed under a phased plan that envisaged adaptation measures such as the installation of ramps.

53. **Mr. Kolbanov** (Russian Federation) said that the Government was taking steps to boost the birth rate. One important measure was to provide women with greater opportunities to combine retraining with bringing up children. Mothers who were not inclined to return to work would be given access to premises where they could set up nurseries for their children and the children of friends and relatives. Another component would be the introduction of certified childminders, who would be registered as self-employed and who would have to meet certain requirements and professional standards. The Government aimed to launch its preschool education programme within three to five years.

54. **Ms. Trinchenko** (Russian Federation) said that, in 2016, the Government had endorsed a comprehensive plan of action to ensure access to vocational training for persons with disabilities. Federal standards laid down the conditions that were to be provided so that persons with disabilities could access higher education, including the option of distance learning, the selection of teaching locations based on the student's health status, adaptation measures and the extension of periods of study, if so required. To evaluate universities' ability to provide education to persons with disabilities, the Ministry of Education and Science had developed a system of 45 indicators, such as whether the university provided an obstacle-free environment, special technical resources, a tailored education framework and assistance in finding work. The Ministry had also launched a website that provided persons with disabilities with exhaustive information about education opportunities.

55. Federal educational standards were applied throughout the Russian Federation, so that children from the eighth to the eleventh grades studied courses on anatomy, biology and the basics of healthy lifestyles. Local regulations also allowed schools to teach students about subjects such as preventing HIV/AIDS, preventing adolescent pregnancy, contraception and body changes during young adulthood.

56. **Ms. Zaitseva** (Russian Federation) said that citizens of non-traditional sexual orientations were not discriminated against, and that all citizens were equal and enjoyed the right to education. Children enjoyed special protection with a view to their moral and spiritual development. Federal Act No. 436 on the Protection of Children from Information Harmful to their Health and Development had been adopted in the light of children's vulnerability to the development of new information and communications technologies and the negative impact of certain online content. The Act conformed to international norms, including articles 13, 17 and 34 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and recommendations Nos. R (89) 7 and R (97) 19 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which required States parties to protect children from materials harmful to their well-being.

57. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation) said that, in response to the criticism of Federal Act No. 135, he wished to echo the words of the President of the Russian Federation, who had stated that the State party's traditions and culture should be respected, just as the Russian Federation respected the traditions and cultures of other countries.

58. **Ms. Trinchenko** (Russian Federation) said that refugees enjoyed preferential treatment in terms of being able to access educational establishments. For example, they were allowed to enrol in secondary education upon completion of a single State examination, which they could resit on several occasions. Although the Ministry of Education and Science routinely contacted the education authorities of refugees' country of origin to verify their schooling and qualifications, the lack of a response did not prevent them from being admitted to Russian educational establishments.

59. **Mr. Sirenkii** (Russian Federation) said that over 200 languages were spoken in the Russian Federation and 73 languages were taught as subjects in schools. The number of indigenous languages used as the language of instruction stood at 25, having risen from 17 in 2005. With the support of universities, over 1,500 indigenous-language titles had been published during the previous 10 years.

60. The nomadic schools project had been implemented in six regions and was already yielding positive results. It was based on the principle that children could receive education while living with their parents, without interruption, and thus maintain their traditional way of life. At the preschool level, the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs had implemented the "Children of the Arctic" project, which had been well received.

61. On the question of Roma education, it was clear that the parents of Roma children did not send them to preschool or kindergarten. That situation led to problems of social adaptation, notably by limiting their ability to speak Russian by the time they reached school age. Notwithstanding the existence of initiatives that sought to help Roma children adapt to Russian schools, it was extremely difficult for children who did not speak Russian well to meet the entry requirements for the first grade. The Roma schools mentioned by the Committee member were not a segregation measure but represented a genuine attempt to help Roma children to adapt to Russian society.

62. **Ms. Trinchenko** (Russian Federation) said that in the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, education continued to be provided in the Tatar and Ukrainian languages in accordance with the wishes of the parents of children or their legitimate representatives. Although the vast majority of schools taught in Russian, there were 52 schools in which the main language of tuition was Tatar and 13 schools in which it was Ukrainian; Tatar was being studied by 20,000 individuals and Ukrainian by 13,000 children. There had been no official complaints from parents about the unavailability of tuition in those languages.

63. **Mr. Windfuhr** (Country Task Force) said that he was grateful for the frank and constructive dialogue, which had enhanced the Committee's understanding of the State party's approach to certain issues and its setting of priorities and limits.

64. **The Chair** said she wished to remind the delegation that the Committee's concluding observations were intended to provide useful guidance for the protection of human rights on the ground, and she hoped that the State party would accept them in that spirit.

65. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation) said that the dialogue had been highly informative and had allowed the delegation to comprehensively address a wide variety of topics. The Russian Federation was willing to associate itself with international instruments and to implement them with a view to improving the situation in the country. Unlike the approach to economic, social and cultural rights that was followed by European and other States, the path taken by the Russian Federation was conditioned by the vast size of its territory and its many ethnic and linguistic specificities, which meant that the Government was unwilling to impose values that some people considered unacceptable and which might even lead to inter-ethnic tensions. Nevertheless, the Government's actions had been broadly in keeping with the Committee's previous recommendations, and it would study the concluding observations carefully with a view to their practical implementation.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*